



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 13, 2012

Chris Conlan (858) 694-2137

GROUND SQUIRRELS TEST POSITIVE FOR PLAGUE ***Campers, Hikers Warned to Take Precautions***

Two ground squirrels trapped during routine monitoring at the Cedar Grove Campground on Palomar Mountain have tested positive for plague, County Vector Control officials announced Thursday.

Officials said the squirrels represented a low risk of transmission because their blood tests showed that their exposure was not recent, but were conducting flea-control measures and posting plague-warning signs at Cedar Grove and nearby Doane campground as a precaution.

Jack Miller, director of the Department of Environmental Health, said people could take simple steps to protect themselves from possible exposure when camping and visiting parks.

"It is important that campers avoid contact with squirrels and their fleas," Miller said. "Set up your tents away from squirrel burrows, don't feed squirrels and warn your children not to play with squirrels."

Plague is a bacterial disease of wild rodents that can be transmitted to humans through the bite of infected fleas. To date, there have been no locally acquired human cases of plague reported in San Diego County. Flea populations are monitored, and control measures are taken as necessary at campgrounds to reduce the potential for human exposure.

Visitors, hikers and campers in rural mountain areas should look for these signs and always follow these precautions to prevent contact with the fleas:

- Avoid contact with ground squirrels, chipmunks, and other wild animals.
- Do not feed, touch or handle wild animals.
- Do not rest, camp or sleep near animal burrows in the ground.
- Protect pets by keeping them on a leash, use flea control, or best of all, leave pets at home.
- Contact your doctor immediately if you become ill within one week of visiting a known plague area. Symptoms include a sudden onset of fever, chills and tender swollen lymph nodes.
- Do not touch sick or dead animals.

For more information about plague surveillance, call the Vector Control Program at (858) 694-2888 or visit the website at www.SDVector.com.

###